

"Legislation puts into gear a new energy policy"

Washington, DC - Rep. Peter Welch supported and Congress has passed the first increase in automobile mileage standards since 1975 as part of a major energy bill that boosts energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The Energy Independence and Security Act, H.R. 6, passed the U.S. House this morning and will be sent to the President for his expected signature.

Automobile mileage standards will be increased to 35 mpg by 2020 and will save the average driver between \$700 to \$1,000 each year at the gas pump, in total a \$22 billion net savings by 2020.

Welch, who managed the rule for the bill, said "As Vermonters feel the pinch of record high fuel and energy prices, this legislation charts a new energy future of improved efficiency and renewable energy. For too long our nation's energy policy has been stuck in neutral with a dangerous and costly reliance on foreign oil. This bill will cut greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, provide more affordable energy, and make us safer at home."

Welch added, "While this bill is just a first step forward, it marks a historic departure from our old energy policies and starts us down a path toward a more sensible future."

A Welch-sponsored amendment to establish a grant program to support energy sustainability and energy efficiency on college and university campuses was also included in the bill. This program was championed by Sen. Bernie Sanders in the U.S. Senate.

Welch has been a vocal advocate for increasing automobile mileage and emissions standards, rallying 89 members of Congress in September to urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to promptly grant California a waiver to adopt stricter emissions standards, allowing other states to follow its lead.

In June, Welch led what was ultimately a successful effort in Congress to block a proposal being considered by the House Energy and Commerce Committee that would have prohibited states like Vermont from adopting auto emission standards that are tougher than those imposed by the federal government.